



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Monarchy in Scotland

Citation for published version:

Cairns, JW, *Monarchy in Scotland*, 2013, Web publication/site, Edinburgh Legal History Blog.
<<http://www.elhblog.law.ed.ac.uk/2013/07/23/monarchy-in-scotland/>>

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Cairns, J. (Author). (2013). Monarchy in Scotland. Edinburgh Legal History Blog.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



The Edinburgh Legal History Blog

Monarchy in Scotland

Posted on [23/07/2013](#) by [John Cairns](#)

The birth of a Prince to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on 22 July calls for some reflection in a Legal History Blog, particularly one based in Scotland, with which our British Royal family has such close links, both ancient and recent. Of course, the Duke's and Duchess's studies at the University of St Andrews are well known; less well known is that the Duchess's sister, "Pippa" Middleton, studied at your blogger's University of Edinburgh. Indeed in Edinburgh our current Chancellor is HRH the Princess Anne, the Princess Royal. Again the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, was famously a member of the ancient Scottish noble family of Lyon (now Bowes-Lyon) who own Glamis Castle and hold the pre-Union Earldom of Strathmore and Kinghorne. After the death of her husband, her late Majesty liked to spend summer at the Scottish home she acquired in Caithness, the Castle of Mey.

HRH Prince William of Wales, as well as being Duke of Cambridge, holds the ancient Scottish title of Earl of Strathearn. The ancient Earldom of Strathearn was one of the most important Earldoms of medieval Scotland. In the later Middle Ages it became linked to the royal Stewart line of Scotland from whom the present royal family descend. In the past three hundred years the Strathearn title has been granted from time to time to members of the Royal family. Other ancient Scottish Stewart and Bruce titles are held by HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales. Thus he is Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron Renfrew, and Prince and Great Steward of Scotland. These were titles borne by the heir apparent to the Kings of Scotland. Robert Bruce, from marriage to whose daughter Marjorie the Stewarts acquired the Scottish Crown, was Earl of Carrick. The title of Great Steward of Scotland became linked with the Scottish Crown when Robert Stewart, then Great Steward, succeeded as Robert II, acquiring the right through his mother Marjorie Bruce. Prince Charles is also Lord of the Isles. The Lords of the Isles were originally the Macdonalds. Disloyalty to and rebellion against the Stewart dynasty led to their deprivation and the acquisition of the Lordship by the Crown.

When the English royal line failed with the death of the childless Queen Elizabeth in 1603, James VI, King of Scotland, inherited the English throne, as his great grandmother was Mary Tudor, daughter of Henry VII. Gloriana may have been a wise and prudent monarch who presided over the glories of late-Renaissance England, but it was her doubtfully prudent cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, who produced an heir, and secured the final triumph for the Stewart dynasty of succession to the throne of one of the most powerful countries in Europe. James was a wise and educated man and a skilful king, but his grandson James VII and II was not and managed to lose it all. But an English Act, accepted by the Scots Parliament as part of the Union agreement with England, led to the settlement of the throne on Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her descendants. An intellectually gifted woman, and friend of Leibniz, Sophia was the daughter of Frederick, Elector of the Palatinate, and Elizabeth Stewart, daughter of James VI.

This means the new young Prince ultimately descends from the Stewart dynasty through Elizabeth Stewart, daughter of James VI, and can claim Mary, Queen of Scots, Robert Bruce, King of Scots, Malcolm Canmore and his Queen, St Margaret, and even Cináed mac Alpín (Kenneth mac Alpin or Kenneth I), King of Scots back in the ninth century, as his ancestors. It is a rich inheritance.

Although James VI's inheritance of the English throne as James I in 1603 is described as the Union of the Crowns, and James himself adopted the title King of Great Britain, it was only in 1707 with the Union of the Parliaments

that in fact the two countries became united under a single monarchy. Prior to this, there was what historians call a multiple monarchy: the King of England was also King of Scotland and, for that matter, King of Ireland. The union was only in the person of the monarch. But after 1707, the Kingdom was United as Great Britain – after 1801 also with Ireland.

This may all seem to many a rather obvious history lesson; but your blogger has been asked more than once by people ignorant of British history about why in Scotland we accepted an “English” monarch and was this not the product of conquest by England! The monarchy is indeed a truly “British” institution, with strong historical roots in both England and, especially, Scotland – indeed more than I have explained here. There is, of course, much more to the legitimacy of modern monarchy than hereditary right, and there always has been; but one significant aspect of our current Queen’s right to the throne of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (and hence to be Queen of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and so on) is her descent from Cináed mac Alpín, King of Scots, through King Robert I (the Bruce) and King James VI of Scotland.

This entry was posted in [Legal History](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

The Edinburgh Legal History Blog

Proudly powered by [WordPress](#).